



africa

MAY-JUNE 1960



Photo Inforcongo—Social Service, Leopoldville, Congo



Social Service—Morocco

African Women in Africa Today

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO the Congress of West African Women held a meeting at Bamako, West Africa, with delegations from Dahomey, Voltaic Republic, Senegal, Sudanese Republic and Guinea. Having given a summary of the discussions of the Congress, Mrs. Aichatou Diop, President of the Union of West African Women, commented on the general resolution taken by the members of the Congress:

"As a result of our work, the general resolution, unanimously adopted, concerns the rights of women, the education of children, social problems, independence and African unity. It is commonly agreed that in our society, the woman is not man's equal; that is why the Congress has attacked all the customs strengthening that conception; and that is why it has retained civil marriage, not French civil marriage, but a civil marriage adapted to our country and which guarantees to the spouse, the rights given her by present day progress.

To give only one example, we find it difficult not to condemn the repudiations which occur so rapidly and so often. It seems just to share the opinion of Guinea on the abolition of polygamy . . .

In a word, the denial of equality to the woman and the customs favoring her subjection are no longer admissible in a New Africa in the full swing of evolution. "THE EQUALITY OF THE WOMAN" is

the slogan of the day, the rallying cry not only of a whole feminine generation which is becoming conscious of itself but of a more and more numerous masculine elite. All those who aspire towards a renewed Africa and who work for its happiness and posterity know that at the basis of every durable and solidly established society, is the family and that the heart of the family is the wife, the mother.

Like mother, like family and like society which makes a people. Africa is what the African woman is. (P. Charles, S.J.)

In the countries of North Africa, the same ardent aspirations are coming to light and are very clearly manifesting themselves.

"We, the young Algerians of today, wish to participate in the historical evolution of North Africa. We are determined to carry on a tenacious fight against the veil, marriage without our consent, ignorance and the superstitions which are the origin of all the evils that afflict us. We are resolved to employ all our strength to re-create in our homes just and healthy moral surroundings, to regenerate the family code, to transform the intimate life of our society." . . . (Nadia and Salama, young Algerians).

Everyone knows of the daring and generous initiatives of the Sultan of Morocco's own daughter in favor of the evolution of the Moroccan woman.

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Lay-out, Art—Charles R. Hawk

African Women in Africa Today

IN TUNISIA, the National Union of Tunisian Women, created in 1956, has for its end the emancipation of the woman and her education . . . from a family, cultural, social and political point of view. It is this National Union of Women which begged President Bourguiba to give to the Tunisian women the same rights enjoyed by the men, not to impose on them added restrictions, particularly in what concerns education.

They likewise petitioned President Bourguiba to grant women participation in the administration of municipalities as it is done in evolved countries.

President Bourguiba gave his consent. Upon receiving its independence, Tunisia emancipated the young woman; the slow feminine evolution begun during the last century, reached maturity. Little by little it is being recognized and accepted by the men. The veil of the young Tunisian girl is disappearing and, with it, one of the veils which separated civilizations.

Thus it is that at the instigation of feminine movements, set in motion by the near East and multiplied in Africa, the condition of the Moslem woman is not at all what it used to be; the women are more educated, less separated from the exterior world, freer in their movements. It is no longer rare to see husband and wife walking together, going to the theatre. Nor is it still a rare occurrence for fiancées to see each other before their marriage, nor for their union to depend uniquely on the choice of the families.

As Miss Rabia Lacheref, President of the Moslem Girl Scouts in Algiers, has stated, "these past years following the war are worth centuries of evolution for the Moslem woman . . ." For the Moslem woman—and for the African woman, whether she be from East, West or North Africa. Having remained a long time outside the run of progress because of traditional prejudices, she is now beginning to take her place in the social and intellectual evolution of her country.

Doubtlessly, this transformation is not following

Mukusu woman from Congo.



photo Inforcongo

Moroccan woman.



photo—Information Service, Morocco

African Women in Africa Today

the same rythm everywhere. To be convinced of this, it suffices to traverse any region whatsoever of the African continent . . . In and around Algiers, more and more young Moslem women frequent the University and keep up with the rapid tempo of western life. In contrast, in certain oases in the Sahara Desert, dress and way of life remain unchanged from biblical times.

CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICA can boast of such cities as Mombasa, Nairobi, Kampala, Leopoldville, Dakar, Accra—large, modern, teeming with life and noisy activity. Women students attend the Universities of Makerere, Lovanium and Achimota, following the same studies as the men and prepare for the same professions: nurses, mid-wives, teachers, group leaders. More and more numerous are the women who, in one way or another, through social organizations, participate in the evolution of their race.

Right next door to these Europeanized cities are

bush centers, little or not at all touched by modern progress, still clinging to customs which deny woman her legitimate right to equality, initiative and freedom.

But evolution in Africa is waiting for no one and is speedily making its way to the most remote corners of the grasslands, the mountains and the deserts.

Women, often passing abruptly from a primitive way of life to the demands of a modern one, find themselves brutally and profoundly shaken. Even greater, perhaps, is the confusion of the young girl, hungry for progress, receiving in certain milieu only misunderstanding and contradiction from a society opposed to her emancipation.

"Our problem is crucial, acute," protested some young girls from North Africa. "We are looked down upon by all classes, even by our own families where we should find comfort and encouragement. As it is, they consider us revolutionary, traitors. And yet, our aspirations are just."

Village women from Guinea enjoy their new reading skill.



A typical Western Nigerian lady dressed in Yoruba fashion.



photo. Information Service, London

African Women in Africa Today

These girls throw themselves into their studies, desiring to ensure a better future and too often minimizing the value of their own culture, they borrow the fruits of despair and atheism from the West, allowing their Islamic faith to die and consequently experiencing a painful emptiness.

"I am no longer Moslem, I am not a Christian, I am nothing!" cried one of them, a young Parisian student, who spent nights in tears.

Hers is utter distress, but only because she does not know the strength and kindness of One who came to take it upon Himself. Distress which can be heard in the nostalgia of their songs:

"I am like an eagle with a wounded wing —
Whose brothers take flight and head for
sunny skies —
Powerless, watching them soar on high.
O my God, my Lord, give my heart
Resignation and patience."

In Africa where transition is necessarily painful, the role of the Missionary Sister is, above all, one of welcome, of disinterested friendship, understanding and kindness.

"In spite of the zeal of missionary priests," declared Cardinal Lavigerie, "their efforts in Africa will never bear sufficient fruit if there are not women apostles to carry on the apostolate among African women, for there, only women can approach other women and bring them salvation. Throughout the world, but particularly in Africa, no one is more suited for this work—primarily a work of charity—than a woman."

Because no Christian society can exist without the Christian family and because no Christian family is possible without a Christian wife and mother, it is easy to understand why our labors take that direction. Through schools, social organizations and friendly relations, we are trying to educate the young woman

A young African woman speaks over the radio in Stanleyville.



photo Intercongo

African Women in Africa Today

and prepare "women apostles" who can assume leadership—"for it is the Africans themselves who must shape their country."

Already more than 5,000 African religious are devoting their enlightened and disinterested zeal to the service of their people.

As Dr. J. Spaey put it: "These African Religious, although emancipated, thoroughly understand their tribal origins. Among the primitive, social and educational formation will take place through the efforts of these native Religious, or it will not take place at all.

Responding to the designs of the Church and contributing to the task of civilizing her country, the African Sister is aiding the young girl to fulfill her role of wife and mother. She is also teaching mothers who never went to school, to fill in the gaps made by this lack of education.

The African Sister may be of our times, but she

also remains a part of her people, and her discreet action serves as yeast to leaven the whole bread.

She is, for Christian Africa, joy and hope.

In this present issue of AFRICA we have tried to give a general, though inadequate, view of the feminine situation in Africa today. Our aim is to create ties of sympathy and solidarity between the women of America and our African neighbors. For, although separated by space and customs, these African wives and mothers feel in their lives and hearts the same sentiments that lie in the best of us.

May all share the wish of that great apostle of Africa, Cardinal Lavigerie: "May Mary, that Woman blest above all others, guide these mothers and wives whom God made equal to men, and by them, integrate all families into the immense Mystical Body of Christ."

SR. JACQUES DE COMPOSTELLE

An African secretary employed at an information center in Leopoldville.



The African Sister - a leader among her people.



photo Africa Films

*"Daughter of the Ancient Eve,
We Know the Gifts Ye Gave and Give;
Who Knows the Gifts Which You Shall Give;
Daughter of the Newer Eve?"*

*Africa Wants
Educated Catholic
African Women*

Dr. H. Jowitt, C.M.G., lately Professor of Pius XII Catholic University
at Roma, Basutoland, and formerly Director of Education
of His Majesty's Government in Uganda, deals in this article
with one of the most important aspects of the foreign
Missionary apostolate today: the molding of Catholic intellects
as well as Catholic wills.

Africa is on the march. For many the tempo is accelerating at an overwhelming pace.

One of the greatest challenges of the day is to ensure that the African daughters of the Church have a fitting place in the vanguard.

There is a better cry than the familiar one of "AFRICA FOR THE AFRICANS." It is "AFRICANS FOR AFRICA," so much more meaningful. This must mean "educated Africans for Africa," and - let it not be forgotten - "educated Catholic

women for Africa," for it is so easy to make the cardinal mistake of concentrating on the men and forgetting the women.

Why must we perpetuate this mistake? To do so must spell intellectual abdication, leading to confusion, restlessness, pessimism and despair.

As Frank Sheed said: "For the soul's full functioning, we need a Catholic intellect as well as a Catholic will."



photo Information A.O.F.
Ministère de la France d'Outre Mer



photo Intercongo



THE MONOPOLY OF MEN

Should education be the monopoly of men? The women are an important medium through which the light of truth may reach the minds of the next generation. Central to this must be the place of the African Religious. This you cannot doubt. This you must assist.

In earlier days in the west the education of girls was regarded of minor importance. Instead, recognition was given to preparation for marriage, the social graces, deportment and the like.

It was a long time before the older universities opened their doors to women, and it is only recently that the professions have done so.

In Africa the marked disparity between the education of the two sexes derives largely from traditional conservatism regarding women, the bread-and-butter value of boys' education with widening vocational opportunities, and the bride-price which is demanded on marriage.

Hence the percentage of girls enrolled in schools is small. The great majority of these merely acquire a smattering of literacy; the number who proceed to post-primary work, although growing, is most inadequate; and those who follow post-secondary studies, academic, professional or vocational, are negligible in relation to population figures and needs. Herein lies the challenge to Church and community.



photos UNESCO

FIRST FRUITS OF BATTLE

With meager resources in finance and personnel, the Catholic Sisters in Uganda and Kenya are bravely entering the lists to fight this issue, with most commendable, if limited, results.

Thus in Uganda there are two excellent senior secondary schools for girls at Namugunga and Nabbingo, and in Kenya at Loretto. In the Novitiate School at Nkokonjeru and Bwanda African Religious may find their way to the Cambridge Senior Certificate studies.

Then too, there are about 10 junior secondary schools for girls, where African Religious and lay are being trained at various levels for teachers' diplomas. Many qualify for posts in junior secondary schools.

It is clear, therefore, that in this respect the Sisterhoods are loyal to the teaching of the encyclicals, and regard their intellectual apostolate for African women as of special urgency.

There is not the slightest intention of abdication here. On the other hand, they realize only too well that their efforts are in no way commensurate with the needs. They long to do so very much more — "more than I can" — but this calls for benefactors who share that longing with them.

THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

The writer some time ago visited the African universities south of the Sahara. Disregarding those in

African Women



photo UNESCO



photo Infocongo

the Union of South Africa and in Cairo, and the Institute des Hautes Etudes at Dakar, this has meant visiting Pius XII University College in Basutoland, the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury, Lovanium in the Congo, Ghana, Ibadan in Nigeria, Khartoum and the University College of East Africa at Makerere.

I did not visit the newly established secular University College at Elizabethville.

In the colleges named, approximately 4,000 students are enrolled in a large variety of faculties. Of this student body approximately 100 are women, and of these — the exact figure is not known — possibly not more than 20 are Catholic, African women.

At Khartoum, out of the 700 students, 680 are Muslim. Only seven are Catholic, and they include no women. It may not occasion surprise, but it will be conceded that in higher education the disparity between the sexes is dramatic.

WITHOUT EDUCATION, A GAP

Does this disparity really matter??? It matters vitally!!!

Because of it, wide cultural difficulties exist between husband and wife, between mother and children; women urgently needed for post-war development programs are just not available, nor can they be for many years to come.

African Religious who are graduates, and therefore

competent to teach in senior high schools, are non-existent. In consequence the future will see a rift, because of differing academic status, between them and African Catholic lay-women who graduate. Moreover, African Religious graduates are needed in teacher training colleges and other fields.

Post-secondary facilities are needed as soon as they can be made available for the best products of the Catholic secondary schools and of the Novitiate schools — for inevitably the latter will develop at various strategic centers.

As needs are demonstrated both Religious and lay could serve the Church and community in Africa much more effectively, if a reasonable number of them could qualify in higher teacher-training; could graduate in arts, science, commerce, fine arts, medicine, architecture, African studies, pharmacy, etc.; and could take diploma courses in arts and crafts, dispensing, journalism, librarianship, dressmaking and housewifery, domestic science, radiography, horticulture and the like.

THE MEANS ARE MISSING!!

The need is definitely there. The means to meet it are not. Of significance is the fact that the only African woman to be a Member of Parliament in Uganda, a Protestant and a Social Welfare officer, holds the degree of Bachelor of Arts of the University of South Africa. There is place for at least one African Catholic graduate alongside her, and for many others in senior departmental posts.

It would be the dawn of a new era when an African Catholic woman of academic distinction were appointed to the staff of the Makerere University College. Nor need the day be far distant.

In Africa there are many, in ever increasing numbers, who are marching, banners flying, into the future without God. They march to some mythical age of material prosperity.

The Church has the means at her disposal to build a saner and happier Continent. To uphold her banner we need more African women with breadth of view, width of horizon and depth of culture. We need for them a vigorous and enlightened intellectual apostolate, so that the light of truth may reach the minds of their people.

UNSHEATH THE SWORD

Canon Drinkwater wrote: "Teach all nations. Education in the hands of the secularist is a broken sword; in the hands of the Church it is a Sword of the Spirit, as yet only half unsheathed."



**"MARY does not mean only the Salvation of WOMAN . . .
but also Salvation through WOMAN"**

Marian Spirituality **OF THE WHITE SISTERS**

CARRIED AWAY by a movement of eloquence, Cardinal Lavigerie one day spoke of the religious of his newly-founded Institute as "the White Sisters." But he pulled himself up sharply, saying: "And here I am giving them that name myself! No, my daughters, that is not your name—I do not want it. You are called 'The Sisters of Our Lady of the African Missions.'"

"You are under Our Lady's protection and you must stay there."

Though the shorter title is now the more familiar name for the Order, the White Sisters have not lost the sense of the injunction; they are most loving children of Our Lady.

Twice a year, on two Feasts of the Immaculate, a group of future missionaries receives, together with the white habit, the name of Mary, attuned to its form in their own language: Mary, Marie, Maria, Myriem, Mirem, Mariella. Sometimes it is linked to the remembrance of a local shrine: Mary of Walsingham, Marie de Lourdes, Marie du Cap, Maria del Pilar, Eremita Maria.

In their sometimes perilous missionary journeyings, the White Sisters know well that a star is guiding and protecting them: Mary, Star of the Sea, in whose keeping they put themselves and their houses every morning and in whose honor is sung every evening the antiphon that gathers all hearts and voices around the Virgin, guardian of all virgins, the antiphon "SANCTA MARIA."

At their girdle they carry a rosary of black and white beads — the chain that binds them and the medium that opens to them a pathway of light and peace. For them, the rosary is the office they recite thrice daily in union with the prayer of the Mystical Body. Three times each day, they "attack God," as Peguy put it, with this "fleet of white sails, the innumerable fleet of Ave Marias," that bears their desires, and all the aspirations, troubles, anxieties and revolts of Africa.

But this wonderful Jacob's ladder is not only a supplication, it is also a contemplation. It recalls the joys, sorrows and triumphs of the drama of our Redemption, in union with Our Lady. This daily recollection of the unfolding of the mysteries of our salvation is in perfect keeping with the White Sister's vocation and along the lines laid down by the Founder. For Cardinal Lavigerie's own devotion to Our Lady, in some respects so tender and affectionate, was nonetheless energetically modeled on his apostolic temperament. It had its roots especially in the words of Scripture, "Maria da qua natus est Christus," which he called a perfect summing-up of Our Lady's prerogatives, since her glory lies in being the Mother of God.

He added: "Mary did not give birth to Jesus Christ only at the Incarnation; she gives birth to Him every day in the souls of the faithful." This great truth is of obvious importance to the missionary, for he too is entrusted with bringing forth

MARIAN SPIRITUALITY OF THE WHITE SISTERS

the Savior of souls. Let him turn to Mary and this good Mother will first of all engender Jesus in his own soul and at the same time associate him the marvelous generation of Our Lord in the souls of others.

For us White Sisters, this approach in and through Mary to the great mystery in which she is associated, not only situates us in the axis of the missionary church of which we are part, it also assigns to us our particular place there, the one to which the Holy Spirit called us when He brought into being a Congregation dedicated to Africa and the feminine apostolate.

Cardinal Lavigerie, the instrument of this call, wanted us to be apostles like the holy women who followed Our Lord during His mortal life, and who, after His death, preached by their charity and example; yet more, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, who gave Him to the world.

The Rule of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa makes it plain: "Whereas the functions reserved to the priest bid him continue and imitate the public life of Christ on earth, our role as women and as religious is defined by obedience, by silent fidelity and humility, that belong pre-eminently to the hidden life. In the providential economy of the Church, our place is close to Mary, Virgin and Mother."

Gertrud von le Fort, in "The Eternal Woman,"

has thrown light on several aspects of this womanly vocation, in the path traced out by Our Lady:

"Under the cross where Mary became in spirit Mother of all Christians, can be found not only the woman who offered her Child to God, but also the woman who offered to God, who consented to offer to God, the desire and hope of motherhood. The mother of Christ born in souls is the mother who joins the hands of the child of her flesh in its first prayer, but it is also the nun who lovingly leads souls to the heights of religious life . . .

"The religious ideal of motherhood in the Church is indissolubly linked to the idea of her who is Mother as well as Virgin and Virgin as well as Mother."

With what logical depth and precision the love and imitation of our Blessed Mother are bound up with our own vocation; how they light up our way, our participation in the apostolate.

Personal sanctification is a necessary consequence of this imitation. "May God make saints of you," said the Founder, "saints in all truth, so that once sanctified yourselves, you may give to the women to whom you are sent, communication of the divine life within you."

The salvation of women, as that of the world, is essentially linked to the acceptance of this mission with all its requirements, and in close following of the abandonment of her whose title is "Ancilla Domini," handmaid of the Lord. It is by an ever-deeper



and supernaturalized womanliness, by fidelity to our maternal predestination, lived on another plane, by being with Mary all welcome, all service, all love, that we shall be able to take, not only to our African Sisters, but also through them, the message of life that their continent expects and is waiting for.

As Gertrud von le Fort has said elsewhere: "Mary does not mean only the salvation of woman but also salvation through woman."

That is why the Marian devotion of the White Sisters is not content with collective or personal manifestations of their love; it demands a deep-seated attitude, a specific spirituality, a special holiness stamped with the seal of the womanly virtues of which Our Lady is the model.

When they go to the Congo, the Great Lakes of tropical Africa, the Sahara or any other mission; when they endeavor during their years of training to make their hearts truly missionary; when they study the language, customs, religion, of African peoples; or learn the techniques of medical care or education, White Sisters know well that it is all for nothing if they have not emptied themselves of self, of their culture, their prejudices, so as to be ever on the alert, with a love ever new that is ready for anything, and rich solely with God's love and grace: "He has looked on the lowliness of His handmaid."

They know too that a glance at Mary will teach them the essential, for

"She is simply a mirror,
She is simply a reflection,
She is simply purity,
She is simply fidelity."

(P. Claudel)

She goes before to guide us, to teach us to be silent, to teach us to listen and to serve, to perfect to the uttermost the initial gift of the first Y E S.

"Devotion to Mary is to cultivate hope. And when were we more in need of hope than amid the present evils and future fears?" said Cardinal Lavignerie. Is our perspective today any different in the face of the prodigious shattering of African society?

And are we not aware of the irreplaceable role of the woman at this turning on which the future rests? . . . Of this woman, so deeply rooted in the values of the past, and at the same time harbinger of all the hopes of tomorrow?

That is why the White Sisters turn toward Her who is the Woman par excellence, who will help them to understand and always help better the women to whom they are sent, for

"She has been elected,
She has been blessed,
She has been chosen
AMONG ALL WOMEN."

(P. Claudel)

MOTHER GERMAINE-MARIE, W.S.



WHO SHALL FIND

Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her

The young African woman
has entered the flow of modern,
intellectual and social life,
and she will assume
a more and more active role
in the building up of a New Africa.

But there is in Africa
the generation of Women who haven't known the benefits of school,
and who are, none the less, by heart, intelligence,
obscure devotedness and nobility of sentiment,
the most beautiful flower of African soil.

"Simple woman, patient woman"
Woman of the fields
who ignores, perhaps, knowledge of the world,
but who, day after day, patiently goes to get water and wood
and who, untiringly plows and plants her fields . . .

Woman of labor and of sorrow courageously borne,
guardian of ancestral traditions,
You are the one to whom we here pay homage!

Profoundly loved and respected by her sons,
It is to one of them that Camara Laye, an African author
dedicates his poem
and, through her, to all the mothers of Africa.

OH BLACK-SKINNED WOMAN, AFRICAN WOMAN
Oh you, my mother, I'm thinking of you . . .

Oh Daman, Oh my Mother,
You who carried me on your back
You who fed me at your breast,



A VALIANT WOMAN ?

LET HER WORKS PRAISE HER . . . Wisdom, 31, 10

You who directed my first steps,
You who first opened my eyes
To the wonders of the earth,
I'm thinking of you . . .

Woman of the fields, woman of the streams,
Woman of the great river,
Oh my Mother, I'm thinking of you.

Oh you Daman, Oh my Mother,
You who wiped away my first tears,
You who delighted my heart,
You who patiently put up with my foolishness,
How I would love to be near you,
To be a child at your side!

Simple woman, patient woman,
Oh you my mother, I'm thinking of you . . .

O Daman,
Daman of the great family of blacksmiths,
My thought always turns back to you,
Yours is with me each step of the way,
Oh Daman, my mother,
How I would love to feel the warmth of your body,
To be a child at your side . . .

OH BLACK-SKINNED WOMAN, AFRICAN WOMAN,
Oh you my Mother, thank you;
Thank you for all you have been to me,
Your son so far away, so close by your side!

Camara Laye, African author, Guinea.
taken from "The Black Child"



CIVILIZATION

and

VOCA TION

THE MEDICAL OFFICER has been inspecting the small dispensary run by African Sisters out in the wilds. He finds patients waiting in the compound and on the veranda while Sister Magdalen bandages wounds, gives injections and makes babies yell by forcing doses of quinine down their throats. The dispensary is kept in perfect order, the entry registers are kept up-to-date and almost every evening Sister Magdalen operates on eyes blind with cataracts or burnt by trachiasis.

On his way to his car, the doctor says:

"Sister, the most spectacular result of our civilization is, perhaps, these African Sisters."

As I watch Sister Magdalen doing her wonderful work, the doctor's words resound in my ears; and I know that he has not quite understood.

* * *

CIVILIZATION . . . The word that stirs all Africa from the remotest corners in the jungle to the most crowded towns. CIVILIZATION . . . spelling to all happiness, freedom and power. CIVILIZATION . . . a people growing up, ready to release the grasp of the hand that guides it.

It is to prepare and guide this move toward a better life — and to a life with God — that the White Sisters are in AFRICA.

Thirty-five years ago, I knew the very first among the African Sisters — those who came from the jungle wrapped in a loincloth, shy, apprehensive, not knowing how to sit at table nor able to understand any rules. They had to be taught everything like little children . . . to read, write, count. I saw them coming further out of their shell every day and discovering the undefinable joy of being able to express themselves in finding the world and in finding . . . GOD.

* * *

"Why did you join the Sisters?"

Many times have I addressed this question to the novice speaking to me about her past life in the village. The answer has always been much the same:

"But Sister, even when I was still a pagan I felt in my heart that I should do something more."

"I saw the White Sisters caring for the sick who are so numerous, and I wanted to come and help them."

"In my village, there are so many pagans who do not know Jesus. I want to help them get to heaven."

* * *

And what of Sister Magdalen — bent over a face ravaged by leprosy, tending her patient with a mother's care, bringing him relief and cure? Sister

*At this hour when Africa seeks to understand herself
When those who love her regard her anxiously
When too often the bewildered African
loses his way, stumbles, suffers and soon
grows impatient
The African Sister is the answer.*

*In her life transformed and yet well-balanced
In the progressive enrichment of her personality
In the brightness, the happiness, the simplicity
of her smile
In the mystery itself which unites her to God
She is the light, illuminating the ideal
toward which all her people should tend.*

Magdalen could have devoted her life to work other than the care of victims of leprosy. Her personal appearance and professional training could have secured her lucrative employment in the world. Why did she join the African Sisters? Will she answer as these others have?

What a mystery, this call resounding in souls only recently converted from paganism. "I must do God's work" — the only answer to all opposition. Very often flight from home is the only way of answering this call.

Service is not a new idea. Have we not seen men doing the Chief's work. Are there not pages in the service of the Emperor of Mossi and the Mwami of Ruanda whose sole duty is to follow their Chief, admire and serve him? These men do nothing out of the ordinary and they are lucky to be able to serve their Chief.

The Missionaries in Africa have revealed the existence of a Supreme Master, supremely good and powerful: a Master invisible but living in a wonderful kingdom where He will welcome all his earthly subjects to reward them. What better can one do for one's self — and for others — than work for this Lord of Lords???"

Thirty-five years ago!!! What obstacles to be surmounted by a girl wanting to become a religious. The dowry lost to the parents constituted an unpardonable offense. The state of virginity, a veritable shame considered as a sort of suicide among the primitive peoples.

I can still hear Sister John-Mary's pagan mother reproach her daughter on her visit to the novitiate. Pointing to the statues of the Virgin Mother and St. Joseph she exclaimed, with a heart full of resentment:

"Look, they all have their child! Only you, you haven't got yours!"

"And do you regret not having children of your own?" I later questioned the novice. With surprise in her voice she replied:

"But Sister, if I had a child on my back, it would be pretty hard to nurse the sick!"

* * *

Renunciation of motherhood, until recently, was something that the aspirant to the religious life gave hardly any thought to. The obligation to leave home, to be bound by a rule, to obey all — this was a far greater renunciation. It is only after ten or fifteen years that the weight of the burden is felt. As for giving up human love, we can say that this too was



CIVILIZATION and VOCATION

a deprivation unknown to the young African religious. The family, as known in their country, could not give them the idea of this love based on the gift of self and mutual comprehension as well as natural attraction.

I often asked the novice, about to take her vows after long years of preparation:

"Have you given serious thought to what you are undertaking? Have you realized that it is hard for a woman not to have a husband, nor children to carry on her back?" An the reply puts me completely off . . .

"If I had to cook meals for a husband I would not have the time to teach the pagans the way to God."

The African Sister sees in her oblation the choice of a superior love and she would be greatly surprised if told that the renunciation of motherhood is worth the exchange for a spiritual motherhood, so much

superior to the former. These are ideas and ideals that we have but which, for them, are unintelligible.

And perhaps this simple way of answering the "call" makes her one with the mind of St. Paul when he says: "A married woman worries about pleasing her husband; the virgin worries about the things of God." It is exactly that in the concrete: "If I had a child on my back, there would be no place to carry others' children!"

To the postulant coming from the wilds of Africa, a life of union with God, the profound joy of loving Him intimately, does not at first constitute a supreme good worth having. It is an experience that will come to her in the course of her religious life when, bit by bit, she will have learned what Love is.

* * *

Am I now speaking for 1930 or 1960? Are the reasons that brought Sister Magdalen to the Convent different from those which prompted Sister John-

Mary to give herself to God's work? We are living in a century of research, inquiries and interviews. These will perhaps give us a more or less exact percentage of those who entered novitiates in Europe either through reading, social influences or prayerful reflections. But can a vocation ever be a matter of research? Religious vocation, a call from God — how gauge that through statistics? At the most we can differentiate the sign, the pretext of the call, the events which orientated towards a total gift. Very often this sign is so futile, it could well not have existed. We cannot impute to such a trifle the orientation of a life so serious.

Why is Sister Magdalen a religious? She is now used to thinking, to expressing herself — she learned it at school. What will she reply?

"Sister Magdalen, before entering did you think of the sacrifice that is imposed by the renunciation of motherhood?"

The answer, hesitant, almost childlike: "I knew that I could have earned a lot of money, have had beautiful dresses and married an educated man like my student friends . . . but all the same, I chose God."

Has education, then, not made a difference, not penetrated more deeply into her thoughts, giving to her total gift the value of a sacrifice freely accepted with full knowledge?

Religious vocation is, first of all, a call from on high, before being a reply from here below. It is not a chance meeting of a "sublime ideal" with our most intimate aspirations. A vocation is a call from God and this call, like all the things of God, does not depend on education and civilization, nor is it a perfect expression of them. A vocation is always a mystery. It was thus in the Bible: "Before you were formed in your mother's womb, I called you." And it is still so in the Gospel: "He called those He Himself wanted." And this has gone on for twenty centuries in Africa as in China, among the illiterate in the jungles as among the philosophers like Edith Stein.

Throughout all the answers to the "WHY" of the call from God, there runs one common thread: "I HAD TO COME." God's call transcends all human happenings, all civilization, progress, culture and education — it takes its rise in Eternity. As well as being the crowning of a life, it is the very cause

of existence: "I HAVE LOVED YOU FROM ALL ETERNITY."

And so we must answer the admiring Medical Officer:

"No, Doctor, the vocation of the African Sisters is not the most splendid result of civilization; it is the result of GRACE."

As Christ made His own human nature in order to divinize it, so grace works through all that is human in us, through our natural abilities, endowments and accomplishments. God's call precedes all this, it transcends all that is human, but it will follow all its twists and turns, its fluctuations and its progress.

In the past a meager intellectual preparation was enough to do "God's work." The first African Sisters learned to read and write in their native language, followed a six months' course at the dispensary and this qualified them to teach or tend the sick.

* * *

TIMES HAVE CHANGED . . .

If the African Sisters do not as yet frequent the Universities and acquire degrees, they are, at least, well on the way to doing so. They must keep pace with the elite of their race.

These Sisters have grown up with their people. They have already been called upon to govern and to take the plunge, letting go the hand that guided them. It is the role of the educator to transform the child into an adult. It is an honor for the Church to have taken the initiative and given the lead.

The time will come when African Womanhood will sound the depths of the beauty and value of God's call. When from their very being will rise regret for the sacrifices of motherhood, so much esteemed in their race, then will they find in their faith and intellect the reply to nature's voice . . . perhaps the words of Eleana in the Bible: "AM I NOT MORE TO YOU THAN TEN CHILDREN?"

Yet the last word of their civilization is not in this intellectual and spiritual progress. Civilization is something from here below; Christ is from up above. He it is who has the first as well as the last word:

"YOU HAVE NOT CHOSEN ME BUT I HAVE CHOSEN YOU THAT YOU MAY BEAR FRUIT" . . .

SR. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY, W.S.

African Women **IN KABYLIA**

AN OLD WORLD IS A NEW WORLD





LOVE OF A PEOPLE is not enough if we are to respect them, understand them and adapt ourselves to them; we must first know them. To know a people, is not just a question of discovering a different mentality in a frame-work of life similar to our own; We must interweave two civilizations, cross over into another milieu.

Whatever be her culture, the extent of her learning, the depth of her pedagogic or medical training, the White Sister who has not penetrated the psychology of her pupils or her patients will be an imperfect instrument in God's hands. What broad-mindedness, what a study of life, what going out of self are required!

Study of life means, first of all, study of the language, the institutions, the social structures. For the White Sister, specialized training is assured in one of the North African study houses: Tizi-Ouzou for Berber Studies, Tunis for Arabic. There she endeavors to find out in what the Berbers or Arabs differ from us, and what they contribute to mankind. Contacts as frequent as possible with the elite of the country, with families of every social status, allow her to see the different reactions and so discover a new world.

Two years in a house of studies is a good begin-

ning, but training in knowing a people and their language and ways of life never really ends. Most people need five years' study of Arabic before they can read with ease a daily paper published in Tunis or Cairo; and as for the understanding of the soul of the people, each day brings new light, new depth and greater possibilities for a fruitful apostolate.

In Africa south of the Sahara, it would be well-nigh impossible to open central houses of study such as those in the north, the language and customs differ so from one tribe to another.

Usually, Sisters there spend the first six months after their arrival studying the language and customs. By then they are able to talk to the people well enough to carry on apostolic activities and to further increase their knowledge.

In more primitive areas, the White Sisters' first task is to help the people in their needs and then bring them to Christianity. Whether the work be medical, educational or social, it all contributes ultimately to the spiritual development of the nation.

BUILDING A NEW FOUNDATION

THE KABYLE ENVIRONMENT

The social system in Kabylia is based on patriarchal institutions of the greatest simplicity that make it quasi-impossible for an individual to free himself from the family, or the family to shake off the yoke of the tribe—nor can the tribe live outside the ancestral customs of the whole people.

So it is that, one family depending on another, from district to district, village to village, tribe to tribe, the Kabyle way of life seems to defy all progress.

Yet, strange to say, the individuals making up this society have a remarkable facility for adaptation. Away from home, Kabyles soon adopt the ways of those with whom they are living. But how different when they return home! The men who have been abroad find it hard to come back to the unhygienic manner of living that is usual in the villages. They would want wives who are able to look after a house, see to the clothes, prepare a meal, receive visitors, bring up their children. They desire to improve their way of living. Yet, they seem to be reluctant to depart from ancestral custom!

A Kabyle woman preparing "couscous" — the national dish of Kabylia.



Skilled Kabyle fingers spin wool which will later be woven into cloth.



KABYLIA *AN OLD WORLD IS A NEW WORLD*

The old people especially are very conservative. Many seem to fear any progress that would upset their simple way of life. More particularly, the elders are afraid of feminine emancipation! They do not stop their daughters going to school—but they are not too keen about it. Are they not still the undisputed masters of the domestic kingdom? What will become of male total supremacy that to the woman of the mountains still seems quite normal, when, better educated, she asks for her share of respect, and puts forward her rights as wife and mother? What they want above all, is that their girls keep the customs of the people, that they remain truly Kabyle and love their homes, and in that they are quite right.

This presents a thorny problem to the Sisters engaged in education who must always bear in mind this principle: the girl must be educated not for herself, but in view of the environment in which she is to spend her life.

"A stone is useful for the building of a house only if it is cut for the place for which it is destined."

What is the future environment of our Kabyle pupils? It can vary greatly:

Peasant environment: This will be the lot of three-

quarters of the children. It requires endurance and courage, that girls should not be afraid of fatigue, of trouble, of dirtying their hands, of work in the fields. It makes knowledge of little account.

The daughters of the marabouts, the holy men: These girls must be polite and reserved, submissive enough to accept the perpetual enclosure to which they will be vowed. They must also be full of tact so as not to make a display of their small stock of knowledge in front of their sisters-in-law who might not have been to school and who would be jealous and despise them.

Trade or clerical environment: Here more than anywhere else instruction in domestic science is needed, as the husband will be visited by other progressive Kabyles or by Europeans.

Town environment: This is becoming more frequently the case, now that the men are taking their wives to the towns with them. What does the young Kabyle woman need here? To have a minimum of schooling and a fair knowledge of housewifery, and to be able to fend for herself in difficult circumstances. She ought also to be taught how to meet the various kinds of European women who will come to see her, women of all classes and types and capable of causing her some astonishment.

Grinding the millet is a typical Kabylean chore.



A Kabyle youngster exhibits her crafts.



These are *some* of our problems.

What does it mean to LEAVE HER A KABYLE?

This implies freeing her gently and prudently from her errors and teaching her to put the beautiful and the good into her life, while retaining the simplicity of the other women of her race.

It means teaching her to love all those around her and to keep whatever is good in her surroundings or indifferent in itself: her modest and graceful attire; certain customs sometimes so prudent for safeguarding a woman's reputation; laudable points of courtesy; and, too, the lovely crafts passed on to her down the centuries, envied by many people—the decorated pottery, skillful weaving and other handwork that often reveal a true artistic sense.

What more? We must also make her able to live happily in her surroundings, applying tactfully what she has learned in school, and trying to make those around her happy, being herself more docile so as the better to make others accept the new methods she is introducing. While leaving her still one of her own, as regards all that is exterior, we must endeavor to make her more virtuous, more generous when trouble knocks at the door, more gentle and submissive in trials, more respectful of her parents, especially of her

less-educated mother, and more loving, if anything, than the other children.

This means educating in the true sense of the word, not just giving instruction in various subjects. The Kabyle girl who has been to school must first be accepted, then admired, by those among whom she lives. Through her influence, the whole family must be improved. Later on, she may be able to reach her in-laws and though the effort may take years, she may by her qualities at last attain a position of respect in the household.

There are already quite a number of these leaders, and others are growing up. Thousands are needed! Then, from family to family, neighbor to neighbor, a whole network of happy and transforming influences will be set up that will gradually work on the whole population.

This is the hard but captivating task of the Sisters engaged in education—a noble and inspiring one. *The future of the country, the salvation of the people, depend on the woman, thanks to the providential role God has given woman over her home and family, no matter what part of the world she belongs to.*

SISTER THERESE D'ALENCON, W.S.

African Women

YOUNG WOMEN IN TUNISIA

THE RIPENING FRUIT

Youth: the open window to hope.

Let's forget about the boys for awhile. Besides, those we would care to meet are somewhere in Paris, Toulouse, Montpellier, Cairo, Damascus, Beyrouth or Koweit.

Let's study the girls whom an ancient custom formerly condemned to the monotonous contemplation of "four walls."

Today the daughters and grand-daughters of these "solitaires" are sitting on benches once warmed only by their brothers. They are, without doubt, the new feminine aristocracy, for current speech names them — respectfully — "school girls."

Enter one of these classes unnoticed. You will hear a very modern, yes, man teacher - questioning his young pupils on their concept of life.

Listen as each one cries in her own way: "Long live freedom!" Each one speaks of movement, traveling, change . . . and you can be sure their old

grandmothers are not invited to the feast — and their ideas even less.

Their wings have sprouted and they want to fly off to Egypt, Argentina, Mecca, China and above all to Switzerland where there are plenty of winter sports.

What will you do about the language? No obstacle there . . . We'll learn it. The more modest are content with learning literary Arabic and English; but there are some who imagine themselves speaking Russian, Spanish — and the Latin of Vergil and Cicero.

Perhaps you find them exaggerating. If so, it is because you are forgetting that you have before you future artists, sportswomen, tennis champions, aviatrix.

Something nursery rhymes did not foresee.

I have read old Tunisian nursery rhymes . . . obviously the very fertile imagination of oriental



photo Blondeau

mothers foresaw nothing of all this. Not that a mother would want to minimize her daughter. Let us have no illusions about that! After calling for all the oil of Sahel to anoint her hair; after comparing her eyes to the bird and her waist to the palm tree, her lips have still to utter the best of all . . .

"The Military Chief came to ask for her in marriage. I answered: God bear me witness: I shall not give her up. Two hundred others have rivalled over her hand. These suitors, they are met on every road of the city and every path of the wheat field. O Maryam, I will not give you up, even though they give in exchange the whole of Tunis and all the grain of Ifriqiya!"

She didn't minimize her daughter, but she felt she had to protect her, throw on her the veil of anonymity, almost leave her in swaddling clothes. Her reason? "I fear for her the Evil Eye!"

Her daughter took these maternal fears to heart. She disappeared into the shadows and her discretion became proverbial. "Oh you, who speak so softly," her mother would say with admiration.

What, then, has happened to that gentle voice in today's classroom?

Everyone shouts at the same time: "I want to be free; I don't want to be commanded; I want to take part in sports; I want to be proud so that I'll be respected!"

"I want to be a great skater," one will say to you — after having told you her desire to travel alone in Switzerland.

THE KEY WORD: FREEDOM

Let us leave once and for all these old nursery rhymes and their out-of-date poetry.

Times have changed and so have principles. The first one is: I won't be shy . . . And the second: "I want to be educated so that I can solve my problems — alone."

At this point, you feel like reminding them of the charms of home . . . But to do so is to forget that the ways of yore were good for their grandmothers. "I want to travel, meet people, attend big congresses."

You would like to insist on the beauty of passive

virtues. Don't waste your breath. WILL POWER, ENERGY, PRIDE, OPTIMISM, FREEDOM are the words which spell virtue to them.

Freedom, above all. It is the key word which spontaneously wins the sympathy of the masses. But where shall we find a model for freedom? Europeans have it, without doubt, but they are not Moslems. Happily we can look to our sisters in the Orient! They have all kinds of privileges. They can do whatever the men do. They are very lucky! . . .

THE FRUIT RIPENS

There is a new Tunisia and its name is "Youth." The proof? This classroom we have just visited, where we came in contact with the fruit ripening on the branch.

These young girls come to school with the same joy, the same enthusiasm that animated their grandmothers as they set out for a wedding, a birthday, or a seasonal celebration. In their young minds, school is the book in which are written the conquering words: freedom, progress, science, future, happiness, life.

Evolution exists. Woe to him who tries to trace its limits. Youth is surging ahead.

Tunisia's youth is unpredictable. Do you know of more greedy intellectuals than these young Tunisians. It is no longer a question of appetite but of hunger pains. Your age might tempt you to want to slow down, to channel, to orientate, to speak of wisdom, method. I don't blame you.

You would like to point out the dangers, even their deficiencies. You have your wisdom, youth has a wisdom of its own. Sometimes the latter loses balance . . . But then, maturity does too.

In any case, don't show a negative attitude. They are picking up speed and do not want to be detained.

I know of only one way to handle this kind of situation. It is positive and it is disinterested.

It consists in asking the youth of a country:

"In what way can we help you?"

A. Demeersman, W.F.

Taken from "Tunisie sève nouvelle" (Casterman)

African Women

the African Woman SPEAKS . . .



THE WOMEN OF AFRICA are talking — and their words are echoing throughout the continent.

Aware of their responsibility today and knowing that it will be even greater in the future, African women have formed various women's associations to study and better their conditions of life. The days have long passed when the country women of Africa kept their daughters away from school saying:

"Will the fact that you know how to read make you have food in your mouth?"

Now the schools for girls are overcrowded and others must be opened. Secondary, technical and professional schools, though multiplying, are not able to accommodate all who seek admittance. Hundreds of girls now attend universities at home and abroad, all preparing the better to serve Africa.

Present-day Africa is a far cry from the time when African women spent all the day in the fields or about their homes. Many women are now teachers and social workers and some fill important civic roles, including membership in their municipal assemblies. As recently as April 10 of this year, a woman from the Cameroons was elected member of the Cameroons parliament.

Throughout Africa, the economic life of the people falls largely upon women, for in rural areas they play a great part in the production of food while in the cities many businesses are in their hands.

Some of the women's associations have existed in Africa for some time now. The Church, too, is aiding along this line with *Catholic Action*, the Legion of Mary, the Young Christian Worker Association.

Some of the African Catholic Women's Associations are affiliated with the World Union of Catholic

Women's Organization. Members participated in the World Congress in Rome in 1957, and in 1958 the World Union held two congresses in Africa: in Lome (Togoland) for West Africa and in Lourenço Marques (Mozambique) for East Africa, where the principal problems that concern the African woman were discussed. A third congress is planned for this August at Elizabethville (Congo). The trend of thought of the modern African is indicated in this brief summary of the discussions at the Lome Congress:

THE COUNTRY GIRL

In rural Africa, malnutrition and lack of schools are problems of major importance that concern the women and their families.

It was observed that some girls have been fortunate in living near a mission school and thus obtaining an education, but it is now of utmost importance that all should have access to education.

In the discussions concerning rural Africa, it was noted that the Christians in rural areas have made the larger contribution to the establishment of the Church. Of the 5,000 religious coming from tropical Africa, more than 4,000 are of rural background.

THE CITY GIRL

Madam Ballet, an Ivory Coast young mother of seven children, remarked that in the cities only two out of five go to school, and out of five girls attending school, only two of these go beyond primary studies.

THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF THE GIRL

At the present time, Africa's needs are legion but undoubtedly the most urgent call is for more teachers

from the kindergarten to the university level and for more nurses and midwives — such was the opinion of Madam Mensah, a midwife who studied in Paris and who has four children. Madam Mensah urged that girls be encouraged to enter professions, and she formulated a wish that vocational schools be opened for the girls of Africa.

THE BRIDE PRICE

One of the grave social problems in Africa is that of the bride price, discussed by Father Zoa from the Cameroons. He pointed out that in Africa marriage is very often considered from the family point of view, not as the affair of individuals. The girl's family demands a compensation in exchange. However, this juridical system is no longer justified by the new individualistic society being adopted more and more by the Africans, he said, and the bride price no longer has reason for existence as it had in past times.

ROLE OF THE WIFE

The role of the wife was considered by Madam Oboa of Brazzaville, mother of three children and a teacher at a Catholic mission. She observed that in her city the selection of a partner is less and less imposed by the parents, and marriages are more stable and well-matched. The girl marries when she is about 15 or 16 and is at least seven years younger than her husband, who is always older because he has to gain money for the bride price.

In many young homes, however, the wife considers the house her husband's and, although she feels at home in it, she doesn't take the same interest in it as she would if she shared ownership with him. The menace of separation or her husband's death continually plagues her — she knows that in such a case she will be dispossessed, for there is no law to protect her and custom still dictates this result. Madam Oboa added that, in Brazzaville as elsewhere, it is religion that is emancipating the woman by making clear the place she should hold in her home and how she should be prepared for her role of spouse and mother. Our Christianity, she continued, is drawing us closer together so that in our homes there will be more understanding and love.

THE WOMAN WHO LIVES BY HERSELF

The woman who lives alone presents a delicate problem, and it was discussed by Madam Hoechenou, a teacher from Dahomey. She distinguished several

categories of women who live alone: the widow, the unmarried woman, and the woman abandoned by her husband.

Speaking of the difficulties of the women who live alone — their personal problems, those arising because of their children or those peculiar to Africa — Madam Hoechenou pointed out the spiritual value of such a life, saying it is a mission somewhat like that of souls officially consecrated to God, a vocation in itself. For as Our Lord destines certain souls to the religious life, He also chooses other privileged souls in the world to make reparation by their great trials. These women should understand that Our Lord calls them to a superior kind of life, she said, one that greatly resembles the life of Christ. Their mission is to show that man isn't made only for the things of the earth. These women are called to lead an exemplary way of living, to cultivate a deeper spiritual life, and to devote themselves entirely to their children or the poor, showing in this way the victory of Christianity over all the obstacles resulting from paganism and human nature.

THE MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE

"The role of the woman is to take care of her home," declared Madam Cecil Franklin, a qualified midwife from Togoland. But in her country, she said, the woman isn't always the mistress of the house — she lives in the house of her husband and he considers her simply the mother of his children. She is never really integrated into his family and her real home is that of her father's. Madam Franklin noted the determination of the African woman to gain her freedom as the only way to become the ideal mistress of the home.

THE WOMAN WHO TRAINS HER CHILDREN

Madam Savi de Tore, wife of the president of the Chamber of Deputies in Togoland, in her conference on the woman who trains her children said that it is the influence of the mother which produces the most good, especially in Togoland and the rest of Africa where the child knows his mother better than his father. She stated that the education of uneducated mothers is proving to be incomplete, proving again the necessity of giving women a complete formation.

The training of children was also discussed by Madam Quashie, a teacher in Togoland and mother



Photo Blondeau

The African Woman SPEAKS...

of five children. Nothing is harder than to educate, she said. And since a child can fully develop only in a stable family life, the father and mother ought to assure such an environment.

It is the mother alone, stated Madam Quashie, who will be able to enkindle in Africa that great richness which is the spirit of the family, that special warmth which fills a man's heart when he returns to his home and when he feels that his whole world, all his joys and happiness are in this place, all because of the great love and tenderness coming from the heart of a mother.

CIVIC AND SOCIAL ROLE OF THE AFRICAN WOMAN

The woman has not only a role in her family to fill but a civic and social one as well. Madam N'Kumu, former municipal council member at Leopoldville, in discussing the civic life of a woman recalled the repercussions resulting from governmental policies in regard to salary, housing and education. In these domains, she said, often the future of the mothers of families and young girls is bleak. It is absolutely necessary, she said, that certain women be active in politics to better defend the woman's point of view. "I have the deep conviction," she said, "that if women are progressively called into politics, men and women will learn together to better

know themselves. The conflict between ideas leads to enlightenment, and public affairs are bound to be better run."

THE ROLE OF THE WOMAN IN THE PARISH

Father Adimou, a member of the clergy in Dahomey, talked of the role of the woman in the parish. Today, he said, the African woman is becoming more conscious of her equality with man and is willing to accept responsibilities not only in the home but outside of it as well. In making the path for the Catholic woman who doesn't have the right to remain indifferent to the welfare of her parish, her town and her country, Father Adimou recommended, first, prayer and the good example of Christian life, then collective activity in various Catholic movements such as the Legion of Mary and Catholic Action.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF THE WOMAN

The Christian education of the woman who has been converted after living for years in paganism was treated by Father Bakpessi of Togoland. Essentially all Africans believe in God, he said, but when leaving the pagan world to enter into the Christian world the woman finds her prayer takes another form because Christianity gives her more



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Photo Information Service Morocco.

precise ideas about God, about His Person, His Fatherhood and His Providence. Christianity calls for worship, but above all Christ becomes known to the soul, bringing salvation and the fulness of life.

Often in the life of the convert there comes a time of crisis when pagan customs and the message of Christ clash, Father Bakpessi explained. The convert may see that a gap has been made between herself and her former confidants, the foremost of whom could be her own still pagan parents, and she may wonder if all she hears around her is true. So she must find in God alone the moral strength to hold firm to her faith. At such a time the priest with his kindness and understanding is of great help. God efficaciously aids His neophyte, the crisis passes, and then it is that the real Christian life begins. Entering into the sentiments of Christ, the woman can look at the world with His eyes, share His appreciation and respect for all men, the priest said.

OF THE LOME CONGRESS

After studying the various problems, the delegates of the Congress of Lome insisted on the following points:

On the education of girls:

that many girls' schools be opened and that the curriculum be adapted to the psychology of the young girl and to her role in African society:

that, in order to stress the importance of a solid

religious education, religious knowledge examinations be given girls at least at the end of their school career:

that all young girls should attend courses preparatory to marriage. Similar preparation for marriage was urged for young men.

In considering the African woman and marriage, the delegates asked for:

the suppression of polygamy;

common property rights for husband and wife;

the complete suppression of the custom of promising in marriage girls who have not yet attained the age of puberty;

removal of the bride price when an obstacle to a normal marriage.

Concerning the social and civic role of the African woman it was stressed that the African elite should concern themselves more and more with the extension or creation of the social services needed in their countries, that problems be studied both by girls in school and by women through adult education, and that some women unhesitatingly take on civic responsibilities.

The delegates noted the importance of Catholic Action in the lives of both girls and women. They expressed greater consciousness of their own duty in regard to the spreading of the Faith and resolved to take an active and zealous part in this apostolate.

Sr. Marie Andre du S.C.

White Sister

africa



